

IN THE CLAIMS:

Claims 1-4, and 6-8 have been amended as follows:

1. (Currently Amended) A time-axis compression/expansion method of time-axis compressing/expanding a multitrack sound source signal comprising a plurality of track sound source signals including a rhythm track sound source signal, comprising the steps of:

detecting positions of attacks of said rhythm track sound source signal of said plurality of track sound source signals;

subjecting portions of said rhythm track sound source signal between the detected positions of attacks to a first time-axis compression/expansion process; and

subjecting ~~[[other]]~~ track sound source signals of said plurality of track sound source signals other than said rhythm track sound source signal to a second time-axis compression/expansion process, based on the detected positions of attacks of said rhythm track sound source signal.

2. (Currently Amended) ~~A time-axis compression/expansion method as claimed in claim 1, A time-axis compression/expansion method of time-axis compressing/expanding a multitrack sound source signal comprising a plurality of track sound source signals including a rhythm track sound source signal, comprising the steps of:~~

detecting positions of attacks of said rhythm track sound source signal of said plurality of track sound source signals;

subjecting portions of said rhythm track sound source signal between the detected positions of attacks to a first time-axis compression/expansion process; and

subjecting track sound source signals of said plurality of track sound source signals other than said rhythm track sound source signal to a second time-axis compression/expansion process, based on the detected positions of attacks,

wherein said first time-axis compression/expansion process is carried out on portions of said rhythm sound source signal other than the detected positions of attacks and portions proximate thereto, so as to smoothly join opposite ends of each of said portions of said rhythm sound source signal that are time-axis compressed/expanded to portions of said rhythm sound source signal that are not time-axis compressed/expanded, and said second time-axis compression/expansion process is carried out on said other track sound source signals such that joined portions of each of said other track sound source signals that are time-axis compressed/expanded synchronize with the detected positions of attacks.

3. (Currently Amended) ~~A time-axis compression/expansion method as claimed in claim 1,~~ A time-axis compression/expansion method of time-axis compressing/expanding a multitrack sound source signal comprising a plurality of track sound source signals including a rhythm track sound source signal, comprising the steps of:

detecting positions of attacks of said rhythm track sound source signal of said plurality of track sound source signals;

subjecting portions of said rhythm track sound source signal between the detected positions of attacks to a first time-axis compression/expansion process; and

subjecting track sound source signals of said plurality of track sound source signals other than said rhythm track sound source signal to a second time-axis

compression/expansion process, based on the detected positions of attacks,

wherein said first time-axis compression/expansion process [[comprises]] includes determining a segment length of two adjacent waveforms of said rhythm track sound source signal between the detected positions of attacks, which [[show]] have highest similarity to each other, superposing two adjacent waveforms having a basic period determined by said segment length upon each other, and replacing said two adjacent waveforms by the resulting superposed waveform or inserting the resulting superposed waveform between said two adjacent waveforms.

4. (Currently Amended) A time-axis compression/expansion apparatus for time-axis compressing/expanding a multitrack sound source signal comprising a plurality of track sound source signals including a rhythm track sound source signal, comprising:

an attack position detecting device that detects positions of attacks of said rhythm track sound source signal of said plurality of track sound source signals;

a first time-axis compression/expansion processing device that subjects portions of said rhythm track sound source signal between the detected positions of attacks to a first time-axis compression/expansion process; and

a second time-axis compression/expansion processing device that subjects [[other]] track sound source signals of said plurality of track sound source signals other than said rhythm track sound source signal to a second time-axis compression/expansion process, based on the detected positions of attacks of said rhythm track sound source signal.

5. (Original) A time-axis compression/expansion method of time-axis compressing/expanding a multitrack sound source signal comprising a plurality of track

sound source signals including a rhythm track sound source signal, comprising the steps of:

detecting positions of attacks of said rhythm track sound source signal of said plurality of track sound source signals; and

time-axis compressing/expanding portions of said rhythm track sound source signal between the detected positions of attacks at a predetermined designated compression/expansion ratio without changing a pitch thereof.

6. (Currently Amended) ~~A time-axis compression/expansion method as claimed in claim 5,~~ A time-axis compression/expansion method of time-axis compressing/expanding a multitrack sound source signal comprising a plurality of track sound source signals including a rhythm track sound source signal, comprising the steps of:

detecting positions of attacks of said rhythm track sound source signal of said plurality of track sound source signals; and

time-axis compressing/expanding portions of said rhythm track sound source signal between the detected positions of attacks at a predetermined designated compression/expansion ratio without changing a pitch thereof,

wherein said time-axis compression/expansion process is carried out on portions of said rhythm sound source signal other than the detected positions of attacks and portions proximate thereto, so as to smoothly join opposite ends of each of said portions of said rhythm sound source signal that are time-axis compressed/expanded to portions of said rhythm sound source signal that are not time-axis compressed/expanded.

7. (Currently Amended) A time-axis compression/expansion method as claimed in claim 6, wherein said time-axis compressing/expanding step ~~[[comprises]]~~ includes determining a segment length of two adjacent waveforms of said rhythm track sound source signal between the detected positions of attacks, which ~~[[show]]~~ have highest similarity to each other, superposing two adjacent waveforms having a basic period determined by said segment length upon each other, and replacing said two adjacent waveforms by the resulting superposed waveform or inserting the resulting superposed waveform between said two adjacent waveforms.

8. (Currently Amended) A storage medium storing a program which can be executed by a computer, for realizing a time-axis compression/expansion method of time-axis compressing/expanding a multitrack signal comprising a plurality of track sound source signals including a rhythm track sound source signal, the program comprising:

a module for detecting positions of attacks of said rhythm track sound source signal of said plurality of track sound source signals;

a module for subjecting portions of said rhythm track sound source signal between the detected positions of attacks to a first time-axis compression/expansion process; and

a module for subjecting ~~[[other]]~~ track sound source signals of said plurality of track sound source signals other than said rhythm track sound source signal to a second time-axis compression/expansion process, based on the detected position of attacks.

9. (Original) A storage medium storing a program which can be executed by a computer, for realizing a time-axis compression/expansion method of time-axis compressing/expanding a multitrack signal comprising a plurality of track sound source signals including a rhythm track sound source signal, the program comprising:

a module for detecting positions of attacks of said rhythm track sound source signal of said plurality of track sound source signals; and

a module for time-axis compressing/expanding portions of said rhythm track sound source signal between the detected positions of attacks without changing a pitch thereof and at a predetermined designated compression/expansion rate.